



Public Law 96-114, The Congressional Award Act

Congressional Award

Expeditions/Explorations

What is the Difference between an Expedition and an Exploration?

Expeditions are typically outdoor excursions that include camping, hiking, and wilderness activities. This usually forces the participant to forgo the comforts of home and learn to pack and prepare equipment, set up a tent, and cook food over an open fire. Participants should always take safety precautions and consult an adult when necessary.

Explorations are trips that provide the participant with a new cultural experience. These may include living on a farm, traveling to a foreign country, or exploring a new environment. Explorations involve preliminary research and preparation. Challenges may include language barriers, traveling great distances, or learning new tasks. You may want to consider an overnight stay with a local family if possible.

Whether alone, or as part of a group, everyone's personal Challenge Level is different. Be sure to plan an Expedition or Exploration that's right for you.

What should I include in the Write-up?

The presentation of your Record Book is very important. Be sure to provide as many details as you can, and be specific. There are three questions to consider when you are writing-up your Expedition or Exploration in the Congressional Award Record Book.

- 1) How did you prepare or plan?
- 2) How is this different from anything you have ever done before?
- 3) How were you self-reliant? Include details of how you were able to think on your feet and provide examples of how you took initiative.

The National Office Review Committee will look for this information, especially at the medal levels.

What Qualifies?

Expeditions and Explorations are all about adventure and discovery. **Participants should plan, prepare, and be responsible. Pre-planned activities, or "Sign Up and Go" type trips would not qualify as a Congressional Award Expedition.** School band trips, sport camps, conferences, leadership workshops or competitions are examples of these pre-planned type trips. There are three exceptions to this rule that are acceptable due to the time commitment, total immersion into a new environment and the level of physical and mental challenge required. These include:

- Philmont Scout Ranch, BSA
- Outward Bound
- People to People International Ambassador Trips

Also note that Family Vacations are fun and relaxing, but there must be a level of challenge and discovery involved with the trip to count as an Expedition or Exploration.

If you are looking to get feedback on an Expedition idea, you may submit a written description to the National Office to information@congressionalaward.org, or fax to (202) 226-0131. Send to the attention of: Program Staff. For additional information, call the Congressional Award National Office at (202) 226-0130.